

IV. REMARKS

The above-identified patent application is the United States National Stage of International Application No. PCT/US2003/040519, filed December 19, 2003 which claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. 119(e) of United States Provisional Application No. 60/435,601, filed December 20, 2002. In the international application, the United States was designated as the International Search Authority and as the International Preliminary Examining Authority. Claims 1-104 of the PCT application were determined in the international stage to satisfy the criteria of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) as to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability. In addition, the claims were determined to have met the requirement of unity of invention throughout the international search and the international examination and no invitation to pay additional fees was made under Article 17 (3)(a). Accordingly, the Assignee respectfully requests that claims 1-56 be examined as single group in this National Stage application.

The Assignee has amended the claims section in this application to cancel multiple dependencies from the claims and to cancel some of the claims in order to limit the examination effort in this initial application. Accordingly, claims 1-56 remain in the case. In addition, a priority claim has been added as the first sentence of the specification. All amendments of claims are to be done without prejudice and are not to be construed as a waiver of any right to file other applications such as continuations, divisions, continuations-in-part, or similar applications and have the remaining claims examined without any reduction in breadth.

V. CONCLUSION:

Claims 57-104 have been canceled and claims 5, 6, 8, 10-13, 25-27 and 55 have been amended. Assignee requests that claims 1-56 – each determined in the international stage to satisfy the criteria of PCT Article 33(1)-(4) as to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability, and each determined to have met the requirement for unity of invention – be examined as a single group and allowed at the examiner's earliest convenience.

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Respectfully submitted,

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